

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a dark brown color, framing the central text.

# **GUZ 35**

# **Habakkuk**

*Bible Commentary:*  
*David Guzik TEV - XXXV*

**David Guzik**

**David Guziks' Commentary On**  
**35 Habakkuk**  
**Biblical Text – TEV (Good News Bible)**

**Hab 1:1** This is the message that the LORD revealed to the prophet Habakkuk.

**Habakkuk's Complaint**

Hab 1:2 O LORD, how long must I call for help before you listen, before you save us from violence?

Hab 1:3 Why do you make me see such trouble? How can you stand to look on such wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are all around me, and there is fighting and quarreling everywhere.

Hab 1:4 The law is weak and useless, and justice is never done. Evil people get the better of the righteous, and so justice is perverted.

**The Lord's Answer**

Hab 1:5 Then the LORD said to his people, "Keep watching the nations around you, and you will be astonished at what you see. I am going to do something that you will not believe when you hear about it.

Hab 1:6 I am bringing the Babylonians to power, those fierce, restless people. They are marching out across the world to conquer other lands.

Hab 1:7 They spread fear and terror, and in their pride they are a law to themselves.

Hab 1:8 "Their horses are faster than leopards, fiercer than hungry wolves. Their cavalry troops come riding from distant lands; their horses paw the ground. They come swooping down like eagles attacking their prey.

Hab 1:9 "Their armies advance in violent conquest, and everyone is terrified as they approach. Their captives are as

numerous as grains of sand.

Hab 1:10 They treat kings with contempt and laugh at high officials. No fortress can stop them—they pile up earth against it and capture it.

Hab 1:11 Then they sweep on like the wind and are gone, these men whose power is their god."

### **Habakkuk's Second Complaint**

Hab 1:12 LORD, from the very beginning you are God. You are my God, holy and eternal. LORD, my God and protector, you have chosen the Babylonians and made them strong so that they can punish us.

Hab 1:13 But how can you stand these treacherous, evil men? Your eyes are too holy to look at evil, and you cannot stand the sight of people doing wrong. So why are you silent while they destroy people who are more righteous than they are?

Hab 1:14 How can you treat people like fish or like a swarm of insects that have no ruler to direct them?

Hab 1:15 The Babylonians catch people with hooks, as though they were fish. They drag them off in nets and shout for joy over their catch!

Hab 1:16 They even worship their nets and offer sacrifices to them, because their nets provide them with the best of everything.

Hab 1:17 Are they going to use their swords forever and keep on destroying nations without mercy?

## **Habakkuk 1:1-17**

### **Habakkuk 1 – The Prophet's Problem**

#### **A. The first problem: "How long, O LORD?"**

*1. (1) Habakkuk and his burden.*

**The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw.**

a. **The prophet Habakkuk:** We don't know much about the **prophet Habakkuk** from any other book in the Bible. Since he prophesied the coming Babylonian army and its destruction of Judah, he prophesied some time before that invasion. Many think that Habakkuk ministered sometime during the reign of King Johoiakim, perhaps around the year 607 B.C.

i. It's hard to say with certainty when Habakkuk prophesied. Since he speaks of God *raising up* the Babylonians (Hab 1:6), we can guess that he wrote in the 25-year period between the time when Babylon conquered Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire (612 B.C.) and the time when Babylon conquered Jerusalem (587 B.C.).

ii. We don't know how old Habakkuk was when he gave this prophecy, but it is likely that he lived during the time of godly king Josiah (640 to 609 B.C.) and then gave this prophecy during the reign of one of Josiah's successors. Habakkuk knew what it was like to live during a time of revival, and then to see God's people and the nation slip into lethargy and sin. "Habakkuk had a problem. He had lived through a period of national revival followed by a period of spiritual decline" (Boice).

b. **The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw:** Habakkuk had a **burden** – not only in the sense of a message from God, but also in the sense of a heavy weight. It was heavy in its *content*, because Habakkuk announced coming judgment on Judah. It was also heavy in its *source*, because Habakkuk deals with tough questions he brings to God and God's answer to those questions.

i. The name **Habakkuk** is derived from the Hebrew verb "embrace." His name probably means, "He Who

Embraces” or “He Who Clings.” It is an appropriate name for both the prophet and the book, because Habakkuk comes to a firm faith through grappling with tough questions.

ii. **The prophet:** “This title is rare in book headings (see Hag 1:1; Zec 1:1), and is taken by some to indicate that Habakkuk was a professional prophet, one who earned his living serving as a prophet at the Temple or court, unlike Amos (cf. Amo 7:14)” (Baker).

2. (2-4) *Habakkuk asks God why He seems to delay judgment.*

**O LORD, how long shall I cry,  
And You will not hear?  
Even cry out to You, “Violence!”  
And You will not save.  
Why do You show me iniquity,  
And cause *me* to see trouble?  
For plundering and violence *are* before me;  
There is strife, and contention arises.  
Therefore the law is powerless,  
And justice never goes forth.  
For the wicked surround the righteous;  
Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.**

a. **Even cry out to You, “Violence” and You will not save:** Habakkuk looked at the **violence** and injustice around him in the nation of Judah. He wondered where God was, and why God did not set things right.

b. **Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble?** This was and is an excellent question. Why does God allow us to see iniquity and trouble, in our self or in others?

i. Why God allows us to see iniquity in our self:

- To keep us humble.
- To keep us submissive to Him in the hour of trouble.
- To make us value salvation all the more.

ii. Why God allows us to see iniquity in others:

- To show us what we might have been ourselves.
- To make us see the wickedness of sin, that we might pass by it and hate it, and not indulge in it ourselves.
- To make us admire the grace of God when He saves sinners.
- To set us more earnestly to work that God can use us to save others and extend God's kingdom. "Ah, my brethren, we need to know more of the evil of men, to make us more earnest in seeking their salvation; for if there be anything in which the Church is lacking more than in any other matter, it is in the matter of earnestness" (Spurgeon).

**c. Iniquity... trouble... plundering and violence... strife... contention... the law is powerless... justice never goes forth... perverse judgment proceeds:**

Habakkuk saw trouble and sin everywhere, from personal relationships to the courts of law. This distressed him so much that he cried out to God and asked God why He didn't bring judgment and immediately correct things.

i. Habakkuk dealt with the questions that come up when someone really believes God, yet looks around and sees that the world doesn't seem to match up with how God wants it. Habakkuk saw this – especially remembering the prior times of revival under King Josiah – and asked, "LORD, why are you allowing this?"

ii. "This prophecy deals with the problems created by faith; and with the Divine answers to the questions which express those problems." (Morgan)

## **B. God's answer to the first problem.**

*1. (5-6) God's astounding work: bringing the Babylonians to judge Judah.*

**"Look among the nations and watch—**

**Be utterly astounded!**

**For *I will* work a work in your days**

***Which* you would not believe,**

**Though it were told *you*.**

**For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans,**

**A bitter and hasty nation**

**Which marches through the breadth of the earth,**

**To possess dwelling places *that are not theirs*."**

a. **Be utterly astounded:** God told the troubled prophet, "Don't worry about it. Look at the surrounding nations and from them will come a nation that will be My instrument of judgment on sinful Judah."

b. **I will work a work in your days which you would not believe:** We understand the idea of something "too good to be true," but that isn't what God meant here. This was something "too bad to be true," a work of judgment so astounding that Habakkuk would have a hard time believing it.

c. **I am raising up the Chaldeans:** When the Babylonians (**the Chaldeans**) eventually came against Judah, they came as sent by the LORD. It wasn't that they themselves did not want to come, but God allowed their sinful desire to conquer Judah to come to fruition. If God had not allowed them to do it, they never could have conquered Judah and exiled God's people out of the Promised Land.

2. (7-11) *The strength and speed of the Babylonian army.*

**“They are terrible and dreadful;  
Their judgment and their dignity proceed from  
themselves.**

**Their horses also are swifter than leopards,  
And more fierce than evening wolves.**

**Their chargers charge ahead;  
Their cavalry comes from afar;  
They fly as the eagle *that* hastens to eat.**

**They all come for violence;  
Their faces are set *like* the east wind.**

**They gather captives like sand.**

**They scoff at kings,  
And princes are scorned by them.**

**They deride every stronghold,  
For they heap up earthen *mounds* and seize it.**

**Then *his* mind changes, and he transgresses;  
He commits offense,**

***Ascribing* this power to his god.”**

a. **They are terrible and dreadful:** Habakkuk wondered where God’s judgment was against sinful Judah. The LORD told him that the judgment would indeed come, and when it came through the Babylonians it would be **terrible and dreadful**.

b. **He commits offense, ascribing this power to his god:** When the Babylonians would come and overwhelm the land of Judah, they would wrongly give the credit to their false gods. The LORD knew and said they would do this before it ever happened.

**C. The second problem: “Why do it this way, O LORD?”**

1. (12-17) *Habakkuk wonders why God would use a nation more wicked than Judah to bring judgment on Judah.*



**Are You not from everlasting,  
O LORD my God, my Holy One?  
We shall not die.  
O LORD, You have appointed them for judgment;  
O Rock, You have marked them for correction.  
*You are* of purer eyes than to behold evil,  
And cannot look on wickedness.  
Why do You look on those who deal treacherously,  
And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours  
A *person* more righteous than he?  
Why do You make men like fish of the sea,  
Like creeping things *that have* no ruler over them?  
They take up all of them with a hook,  
They catch them in their net,  
And gather them in their dragnet.  
Therefore they rejoice and are glad.  
Therefore they sacrifice to their net,  
And burn incense to their dragnet;  
Because by them their share *is* sumptuous  
And their food plentiful.  
Shall they therefore empty their net,  
And continue to slay nations without pity?**

a. **Why do You look on those who deal treacherously:** Habakkuk was first troubled that there was no judgment against Judah; God answered by telling him judgment was on the way. Then Habakkuk was troubled by the *agent* of judgment, the Babylonians – who were an even more wicked people than the people of Judah.

i. It would be like crying out to God about the state of the church in America, and hearing God respond by saying, “I’ll fix the problem by a enemy invasion of America.” We might say, “Wait a minute LORD – the problem is bad, but Your cure is worse than the disease!”

ii. Some people face crisis times like this all the wrong way. They withdraw from the church and from fellowship and they pull back into a little spiritual corner. Others give up on God altogether. Lloyd-Jones guides us to a better response:

- *Stop to think* – before talking about it, think about it.
- *Restate basic principles* – As you think about the problem, don't begin with the problem. Go back further to basic principles about God and His dealing with man.
- *Apply the principles to the problem* – now, think about your problem in light of these basic principles.
- *Commit the matter to God in faith* – whether you know what to do or not.

**b. You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness:** This is even more problematic to Habakkuk because he knew the character of God. Since he understood the holy character of God, he was more troubled than ever as to why God would judge wicked Judah by exalting even more wicked Babylon.

**c. Shall they therefore empty their net, and continue to slay nations without pity?** Habakkuk wondered how long God would allow the Babylonians to continue their cruel conquest of nations. It was as if God's people were conquered as easily as fish in a net.

i. "Easily we are taken and destroyed. We have no *leader* to guide us, and no *power* to defend ourselves. Nebuchadnezzar is here represented as a fisherman, who is constantly casting nets into the sea, and enclosing multitudes of fishes; and being always successful, he sacrifices to his own net." (Clarke)

2. (2:1) *Habakkuk resolutely waits for God's reply.*

**I will stand my watch**

**And set myself on the rampart,**

**And watch to see what He will say to me,**

**And what I will answer when I am corrected.**

a. **And watch to see what He will say to me:**

Habakkuk has raised two important questions to God, yet he asked both with a proper attitude. He anticipated an answer from God and was willing to **watch** – that is, *wait* for it. Often when we question God we don't expect Him to answer, but Habakkuk did. Other times we not only *expect* God will answer, but we *demand* that He answer, and answer according to our schedule. Habakkuk approached this with the correct attitude.

i. "How often God's answers come, and find us gone! We have waited for a while, and, thinking there was no answer, we have gone our way but as we have turned the first corner the post as come in. God's ships touch at our wharves; but there is no one to unload them... It is not enough to direct your prayer unto God; look up, and look out, until the blessing alights on your head." (Meyer)

b. **And what I will answer when I am corrected:**

Habakkuk's attitude was also right because he *expected* God to correct him. From this we see that Habakkuk didn't ask God this question because he thought God was wrong and had to explain Himself. He asked it because he knew that he was wrong and he needed to be corrected. His questions were his invitation to God saying, "God, I don't understand what you are doing, but I know that you are right in all things. Please speak to me and correct me."

**Hab 2:1** I will climb my watchtower and wait to see what the LORD will tell me to say and what answer he will give to

my complaint.

### **The Righteous Shall Live by His Faith**

Hab 2:2 The LORD gave me this answer: "Write down clearly on tablets what I reveal to you, so that it can be read at a glance.

Hab 2:3 Put it in writing, because it is not yet time for it to come true. But the time is coming quickly, and what I show you will come true. It may seem slow in coming, but wait for it; it will certainly take place, and it will not be delayed.

Hab 2:4 And this is the message: 'Those who are evil will not survive, but those who are righteous will live because they are faithful to God.' "

Hab 2:5 Wealth is deceitful. Greedy people are proud and restless—like death itself they are never satisfied. That is why they conquer nation after nation for themselves.

### **Woe to the Chaldeans**

Hab 2:6 The conquered people will taunt their conquerors and show their scorn for them. They will say, "You take what isn't yours, but you are doomed! How long will you go on getting rich by forcing your debtors to pay up?"

Hab 2:7 But before you know it, you that have conquered others will be in debt yourselves and be forced to pay interest. Enemies will come and make you tremble. They will plunder you!

Hab 2:8 You have plundered the people of many nations, but now those who have survived will plunder you because of the murders you have committed and because of your violence against the people of the world and its cities.

Hab 2:9 You are doomed! You have made your family rich with what you took by violence, and have tried to make your own home safe from harm and danger!

Hab 2:10 But your schemes have brought shame on your family; by destroying many nations you have only brought

ruin on yourself.

Hab 2:11 Even the stones of the walls cry out against you, and the rafters echo the cry.

Hab 2:12 You are doomed! You founded a city on crime and built it up by murder.

Hab 2:13 The nations you conquered wore themselves out in useless labor, and all they have built goes up in flames. The LORD Almighty has done this.

Hab 2:14 But the earth will be as full of the knowledge of the LORD's glory as the seas are full of water.

Hab 2:15 You are doomed! In your fury you humiliated and disgraced your neighbors; you made them stagger as though they were drunk.

Hab 2:16 You in turn will be covered with shame instead of honor. You yourself will drink and stagger. The LORD will make you drink your own cup of punishment, and your honor will be turned to disgrace.

Hab 2:17 You have cut down the forests of Lebanon; now you will be cut down. You killed its animals; now animals will terrify you. This will happen because of the murders you have committed and because of your violence against the people of the world and its cities.

Hab 2:18 What's the use of an idol? It is only something that a human being has made, and it tells you nothing but lies. What good does it do for its maker to trust it—a god that can't even talk!

Hab 2:19 You are doomed! You say to a piece of wood, "Wake up!" or to a block of stone, "Get up!" Can an idol reveal anything to you? It may be covered with silver and gold, but there is no life in it.

Hab 2:20 The LORD is in his holy Temple; let everyone on earth be silent in his presence.

## **Habakkuk 2:1-20**

## Habakkuk 2 – God Justifies His Judgment

### A. The proud rebuked.

1. (2-3) *Preparation for the answer: how to publish the vision.*

**Then the LORD answered me and said:**

**“Write the vision**

**And make *it* plain on tablets,**

**That he may run who reads it.**

**For the vision *is* yet for an appointed time;**

**But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.**

**Though it tarries, wait for it;**

**Because it will surely come,**

**It will not tarry.”**

a. **Write the vision and make it plain:** God told Habakkuk to record this “question and answer” time for the benefit of others – **that he may run who reads it.** Habakkuk’s revelation wasn’t just for himself, but also to strengthen others. Those who read it would make rapid progress (**may run**), but they couldn’t make this progress if Habakkuk did not **make it plain**.

i. Habakkuk first had to *see the vision*. The preacher cannot make anyone else see what he does not see for himself.

ii. Habakkuk then had to *make it known*. The preacher must do what he can to make the word of God known, and make it known in as many ways as possible.

iii. Habakkuk had to make it known as *permanently as possible* – he was told to **write the vision**. The preacher must do what he can to make a permanent impact on his listeners.

iv. Habakkuk had to *make it plain*. “I have sometimes thought that certain ministers fancied that it was their

duty to make the message elaborate, to go to the very bottom of the subject, and stir up all the mud they could find there, till you could not possibly see them, nor could they see their own way at all . . . They tell people all the difficulties they have discovered in the Bible, – which difficulties most of their hearers would never have heard of unless their ministers had told them” (Spurgeon).

v. Habakkuk had to *make it practical* – **that he may run who reads it**. It doesn’t say, “that he who runs may read it,” but **“that he may run who reads it.”** The *running* – the activity and progress – comes forth from God’s word.

b. **For the vision is yet for an appointed time:** Habakkuk spoke to an age beyond his own. The Babylonian conquest would not be evident in his day, but in the future.

2. (4-8) *God knows how to deal with the proud.*

**“Behold the proud,  
His soul is not upright in him;  
But the just shall live by his faith.  
Indeed, because he transgresses by wine,  
He is a proud man,  
And he does not stay at home.  
Because he enlarges his desire as hell,  
And he *is* like death, and cannot be satisfied,  
He gathers to himself all nations  
And heaps up for himself all peoples.  
Will not all these take up a proverb against him,  
And a taunting riddle against him, and say,  
‘Woe to him who increases  
*What* is not his– how long?  
And to him who loads himself with many pledges’?  
Will not your creditors rise up suddenly?**

**Will they not awaken who oppress you?  
And you will become their booty.  
Because you have plundered many nations,  
All the remnant of the people shall plunder you,  
Because of men's blood  
And the violence of the land *and* the city,  
And of all who dwell in it."**

a. **Behold the proud:** Habakkuk wondered why Babylon – a nation even more sinful than Judah – would be used to bring judgment against Judah. In answering the prophet, God first assured him that He saw **the proud**, and knew that **his soul is not upright in him**.

i. Pride is everywhere and takes all manner of shapes.

- Here is the rich man, proud of what he has.
- There is the poor man, proud of his "honor" in having less.
- Here is the talented man, proud of what he can do.
- There is the man of few talents, proud of his hard work.
- Here is the religious man, proud of his religion.
- There is the unbeliever, proud of his unbelief.
- Here is the establishment man, proud of his place in society.
- There is the counter-cultural man, proud of his "outcast" status.
- Here is the learned man, proud of his intelligence and learning.
- Here is the simple man, proud of his simplicity.

ii. "If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it not to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world, and you shall find it there; and



then go and search amongst the poorest and the most miserable, and you shall find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar's rags as in a prince's robe; and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature; it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace, and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk?" (Spurgeon)

iii. Pride can be especially dangerous among the people of God. Once a man came to John Bunyan after a sermon and told him what a fine sermon he preached. "You're too late," Bunyan answered. "The devil told me that before I stepped down from the pulpit." Satan can tell the praying brother to be proud of his ability to pray, the growing brother to be proud of his growth, and even the humble brother to be proud of his humility.

iv. *"Wherever pride is found, it is always hateful to God.* Why! pride is even hateful to men. Men cannot bear a proud man; and hence it is that a proud man, who has any sense left, often sees that it is so, and he therefore tries to affect manners of modesty. He will seem to be humble, when he really is not, if he has the suspicion that all about him will dislike him if they know him to be proud. But God cannot bear pride; it is a part of his daily business to put down the proud." (Spurgeon)

b. **But the just shall live by his faith:** In contrast to **the proud**, there are **the just**. The principle of their life is **faith**, instead of pride that looks to self. True **faith** looks outside of self unto the LORD God, while pride always looks to self.

i. This brief statement from the prophet Habakkuk is one of the most important, and most quoted Old Testament statements in the New Testament. Paul used it to show that the **just** live **by faith**, not by law. Being under the law isn't the way to be found **just** before God, only living by faith is.

ii. If you are declared **just** – that is, *approved* – before God, you have done it by a relationship of **faith**. If your life is all about living under the law, then God does not find you approved.

iii. In Hebrew, the important part of the verse has only three words: "the justified man," "by his faith," and "will live." Every word in Hab 2:4 is important, and the Lord quotes it three times in the New Testament just to bring out the fullness of the meaning

- Rom 1:17 is the commentary on *the justified man* – "The **just** shall live by faith."

- Heb 10:38 is the commentary on *faith* – "The just shall live by **faith**."

- Gal 3:11 is the commentary on the Christian *life* – "The just shall **live** by faith."

iv. Before his bold declaration of the truth of the gospel, Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk. As a monk he went on a pilgrimage to Rome and as he crossed the Alps he fell deathly ill. As he lay sick he felt great turmoil, both physical and spiritual, and a verse that had previously touched him came to mind: *The just will live by his faith*, from Hab 2:4. When Luther recovered he went on to Rome and did the tourist things that all the pilgrims did. One day he came to the church of Saint John's Lateran, where there is a staircase said to be from Pilate's judgment

hall. It was the custom of pilgrims to climb this staircase, but never on their feet – they painfully climbed a step at a time on their knees, saying prayers and kissing the steps where it was thought the blood of Jesus fell. Luther came to this place and starting doing just as all the pilgrims, because the pope promised an indulgence to all who climbed the steps on their knees and said the prayers. As he did this, Luther remembered the words from Habakkuk: *The just will live by his faith*. It is said that when he remembered this he stopped, stood up, walked down and went straight home to Germany. Some say the Reformation began on those stairs.

v. “Before those words broke upon my mind I hated God and was angry with him because, not content with frightening us sinners by the law and by the miseries of life, he still further increased our torture by the gospel. But when, by the Spirit of God, I understood those words – ‘The just shall live by faith!’ ‘The just shall live by faith!’ – then I felt born again like a new man; I entered through the open doors into the very Paradise of God.” (Luther, cited in Boice)

vi. We are called to live by faith, and nothing else.

- Some Christians live by devotions.
- Some Christians live by works.
- Some Christians live by feelings.
- Some Christians live by circumstances.

Each of these is meaningless and perhaps *dangerous* without faith.

c. **He enlarges his desire as hell, and he is like death, and cannot be satisfied:** God sees the proud man and how the proud man **cannot be satisfied**. The

one who is declared just by faith is satisfied, but the proud man keeps grasping.

d. **Because you have plundered many nations, all the remnant of the people shall plunder you:** Here, God assured Habakkuk that He knew how to deal with nations like Babylon. He promised the Babylonians that just as they **plundered many nations**, so one day others would **plunder** them.

i. The Babylonians were perfect examples of the proud who set themselves against those who are declared just by faith – and Habakkuk could take comfort in the fact that God would deal with them.

ii. “The immediate value of the word was the Habakkuk learned that God’s employment of the Chaldeans did not mean the permanent power of this evil people.” (Morgan)

## **B. Four woes to silence sinful man.**

1. (9-11) *Woe to the greedy.*

**“Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house,  
That he may set his nest on high,  
That he may be delivered from the power of disaster!  
You give shameful counsel to your house,  
Cutting off many peoples,  
And sin *against* your soul.  
For the stone will cry out from the wall,  
And the beam from the timbers will answer it.**

a. **Woe to him who covets evil gain for his house:** God addressed the greedy man, and told him that he was ripe for judgment. The greedy man did his best to protect himself (**set his nest on high**), yet all his best defense would come to nothing.

b. **You... sin against your own soul:** The greedy man thinks in terms of nothing but gain, but ends up losing his own soul. Jesus' parable in Luk 12:16-21 is the perfect example of the greedy man who sinned against his **own soul**.

c. **For the stone will cry out from the wall:** Habakkuk pictured a beautiful house built by a greedy man, and the very stones of the house would **cry out from the wall** against the man's greed.

2. (12-14) *Woe to the violent.*

**"Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed,  
Who establishes a city by iniquity!  
Behold, *is it* not of the LORD of hosts  
That the peoples labor to feed the fire,  
And nations weary themselves in vain?  
For the earth will be filled  
With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,  
As the waters cover the sea."**

a. **Woe to him who builds a town with bloodshed:** The LORD was not only displeased with the greedy, He also pronounced a woe against the *violent*.

b. **The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD:** The violent man thinks that *his* might makes right, so he feels free to abuse others for his gain. As a correction and a rebuke, the LORD reminded the violent man of *His* ultimate triumph.

3. (15-17) *Woe to the drunk.*

**"Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor,  
Pressing *him* to your bottle,  
Even to make *him* drunk,  
That you may look on his nakedness!  
You are filled with shame instead of glory.  
You also – drink!**

**And be exposed as uncircumcised!**  
**The cup of the LORD's right hand *will be* turned against you,**  
**And utter shame will be on your glory.**  
**For the violence *done to* Lebanon will cover you,**  
**And the plunder of beasts *which* made them afraid,**  
**Because of men's blood**  
**And the violence of the land *and* the city,**  
**And of all who dwell in it.**

a. **Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor... You also – drink!** Through the prophet Habakkuk, the LORD rebuked both the drunk and those who promoted drunkenness. Though they thought that alcohol made them feel good, God rightly says they were **filled with shame instead of glory.**

i. In Eph 5:18 the Apostle Paul called drunkenness *dissipation*; drunkenness is a *waste* of resources that should be submitted to Jesus. John Trapp writes of drinking “all the three outs” – “that is, ale out of the pot, money out of the purse, and wit out of the head” (Trapp’s commentary on Gal 5:21).

ii. The damage of drunkenness goes beyond the act itself and into what it effects in lives and families. In the 1990s it was recorded that yearly in the United States alcohol was responsible for almost 100,000 deaths (25,000 by drunk drivers alone), 6 million non-fatal injuries, and more than \$100 billion in economic losses such as unemployment and loss of productivity.

b. **The cup of the LORD's right hand will be turned against you:** The drunk and those who promote drunkenness loved their own cup full of drink; now God promises a **cup** for them, a cup of judgment and just recompense for their sin.

4. (18-20) *Woe to the idolater.*

**“What profit is the image, that its maker should carve it,  
The molded image, a teacher of lies,  
That the maker of its mold should trust in it,  
To make mute idols?  
Woe to him who says to wood, ‘Awake!’  
To silent stone, ‘Arise! It shall teach!’  
Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,  
Yet in it there is no breath at all.  
But the LORD is in His holy temple.  
Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”**

a. **Woe to him who says to wood, “Awake”:** Having dealt with the greedy man, the violent man, and the drunk then God spoke to the idolater – who treated inanimate objects as if they had life and intelligence.

b. **In it there is no breath at all. But the LORD is in His holy temple:** In contrast to lifeless idols, the LORD was alive and well **in His holy temple**. The folly of the idolater will be exposed by the majesty of the living God.

i. Through it all, the point is proven. Habakkuk couldn’t understand why God would judge a sinful nation (Judah) by an even *more* sinful nation (Babylon). Yet God reminds Habakkuk of His own wisdom and strength, and of His ultimate triumph over the wicked. God knew that Babylon was filled with the proud, the greedy, the violent, the drunk, and the idolater – and the LORD knew how to deal with them all.

### **Habakkuk's Prayer**

**Hab 3:1** This is a prayer of the prophet Habakkuk:

Hab 3:2 O LORD, I have heard of what you have done, and I am filled with awe. Now do again in our times the great

deeds you used to do. Be merciful, even when you are angry.

Hab 3:3 God is coming again from Edom; the holy God is coming from the hills of Paran. His splendor covers the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise.

Hab 3:4 He comes with the brightness of lightning; light flashes from his hand, there where his power is hidden.

Hab 3:5 He sends disease before him and commands death to follow him.

Hab 3:6 When he stops, the earth shakes; at his glance the nations tremble. The eternal mountains are shattered; the everlasting hills sink down, the hills where he walked in ancient times.

Hab 3:7 I saw the people of Cushan afraid and the people of Midian tremble.

Hab 3:8 Was it the rivers that made you angry, LORD? Was it the sea that made you furious? You rode upon the clouds; the storm cloud was your chariot, as you brought victory to your people.

Hab 3:9 You got ready to use your bow, ready to shoot your arrows. Your lightning split open the earth.

Hab 3:10 When the mountains saw you, they trembled; water poured down from the skies. The waters under the earth roared, and their waves rose high.

Hab 3:11 At the flash of your speeding arrows and the gleam of your shining spear, the sun and the moon stood still.

Hab 3:12 You marched across the earth in anger; in fury you trampled the nations.

Hab 3:13 You went out to save your people, to save your chosen king. You struck down the leader of the wicked and completely destroyed his followers.

Hab 3:14 Your arrows pierced the commander of his army when it came like a storm to scatter us, gloating like those



who secretly oppress the poor.

Hab 3:15 You trampled the sea with your horses, and the mighty waters foamed.

Hab 3:16 I hear all this, and I tremble; my lips quiver with fear. My body goes limp, and my feet stumble beneath me. I will quietly wait for the time to come when God will punish those who attack us.

### **Habakkuk Rejoices in the Lord**

Hab 3:17 Even though the fig trees have no fruit and no grapes grow on the vines, even though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no grain, even though the sheep all die and the cattle stalls are empty,

Hab 3:18 I will still be joyful and glad, because the LORD God is my savior.

Hab 3:19 The Sovereign LORD gives me strength. He makes me sure-footed as a deer and keeps me safe on the mountains.

## **Habakkuk 3:1-19**

### **Habakkuk 3 – The Prophet's Prayer**

#### **A. Seeking revival from the God of all power.**

*1. (1-2) A plea for revival.*

**A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, on Shigionoth.  
O LORD, I have heard your speech *and* was afraid;  
O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years!  
In the midst of the years make *it* known;  
In wrath remember mercy.**

a. **A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet:** The first two chapters of Habakkuk presented the prophet's question and answer time with God. Now that God had answered Habakkuk, the prophet brought a prayer to close the book.

b. **O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years:** Habakkuk simply prayed for *revival*. He knew how God once worked and how His people once responded, and Habakkuk wanted to see that again.

i. The prayer of Habakkuk shows us that revival is a work of God, not the achievement of man. There is something man can and must do for revival – simply cry out to God and plead for His reviving work.

ii. Notice the prayer: **revive Your work**. Often, my prayer is really “revive *my* work,” but I must have a heart and mind for God’s work, far bigger than my portion of it. “Shake off all the bitterness of everything that has to do with self, or with party, and now pray, ‘Lord, revive thy work, and if thy work happen to be more in one branch of the church than in another, Lord, give that the most reviving. Give us all the blessing, but do let thine own purposes be accomplished, and thine own glory come of it, and we shall be well content, though we should be forgotten and unknown’” (Spurgeon).

iii. At the same time, this must be a *personal* prayer: “LORD, revive *me*.” We too often blame the church for sin, corruption, laziness, prayerlessness, lack of spiritual power, or whatever – and we forget that we *are the church*. Pray for personal revival and diligently search yourself:

- Check your conduct – does your walk glorify the LORD as it should? How about your *private* conduct, which only the LORD sees?
- Check your conversation – is your speech profane or impure? Do you talk about Jesus with others?
- Check your communion – are you living a growing, abiding life with Jesus?

c. **In the midst of the years make it known:** Habakkuk longed for God to do a work that was *evident* to everyone as a work of God. He prayed that revival would be **known** at a definite *time and place (in the midst of the years)*, not just as an idea in someone's head.

d. **In wrath remember mercy:** Habakkuk prayed knowing well that they didn't *deserve* revival, so he prayed for **mercy**. The idea is, "LORD, I know that we deserve your **wrath**, but in the midst of your **wrath remember mercy** and send revival among us."

i. "Sorrowfully, not wishing to be an accuser of the brethren, it does seem to me that considering the responsibilities which were laid upon us, and the means which God has given us, the church generally, (there are blessed exceptions!) has done so little for Christ that if 'Ichabod' were written right across its brow, and it were banished from God's house, it would have its deserts. We cannot therefore appeal to merit, it must be mercy." (Spurgeon)

ii. "O God, have mercy upon thy poor church, and visit her, and revive her. She has but a little strength; she has desired to keep thy word; oh, refresh her; restore to her thy power, and give her yet to be great in this land." (Spurgeon)

2. (3-15) *The power of God on behalf of His people.*

**God came from Teman,  
The Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah.  
His glory covered the heavens,  
And the earth was full of His praise.  
His brightness was like the light;  
He had rays *flashing* from His hand,  
And there His power was hidden.  
Before Him went pestilence,**

And fever followed at His feet.  
He stood and measured the earth;  
He looked and startled the nations.  
And the everlasting mountains were scattered,  
The perpetual hills bowed.  
His ways *are* everlasting.  
I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction;  
The curtains of the land of Midian trembled.  
O LORD, were *You* displeased with the rivers,  
*Was* Your anger against the rivers,  
*Was* Your wrath against the sea,  
That You rode on Your horses,  
Your chariots of salvation?  
Your bow was made quite ready;  
Oaths were sworn over *Your* arrows. Selah.  
You divided the earth with rivers.  
The mountains saw You *and* trembled;  
The overflowing of the water passed by.  
The deep uttered its voice,  
*And* lifted its hands on high.  
The sun and moon stood still in their habitation;  
At the light of Your arrows they went,  
At the shining of Your glittering spear.  
You marched through the land in indignation;  
You trampled the nations in anger.  
You went forth for the salvation of Your people,  
For salvation with Your Anointed.  
You struck the head from the house of the wicked,  
By laying bare from foundation to neck. Selah.  
You thrust through with his own arrows  
The head of his villages.  
They came out like a whirlwind to scatter me;  
Their rejoicing was like feasting on the poor in secret.  
You walked through the sea with Your horses,  
Through the heap of great waters.

a. **His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise:** As Habakkuk prayed for revival he began to praise the God who brings revival. In this song of praise (punctuated by several expressions of **Selah**, as in the Psalms) Habakkuk glorified the power and majesty of God.

i. It is good to praise God like this, and God's people need to do more of it. It is good to praise God because:

- Because it gives appropriate honor and glory to God.
- Because declares God's specific works.
- Because it teaches and reminds us of who God is and what He has done.
- Because it places man in proper perspective under God.
- Because it builds confidence in the power and works of God.

b. **You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with Your Anointed:** As Habakkuk remembered how God had saved in the past, it made him full of faith for what God could do in the present and in the future. He also declared that salvation is brought **with Your Anointed** – and the LORD's anointed is none other than the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

## **B. The triumph of the prophet's faith.**

*1. (16-18) Knowing God's strength, Habakkuk can trust the LORD even in a crisis.*

**When I heard, my body trembled;  
My lips quivered at the voice;  
Rottenness entered my bones;  
And I trembled in myself,**

**That I might rest in the day of trouble.  
When he comes up to the people,  
He will invade them with his troops.**

**Though the fig tree may not blossom,  
Nor fruit be on the vines;  
Though the labor of the olive may fail,  
And the fields yield no food;  
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,  
And there be no herd in the stalls—  
Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,  
I will joy in the God of my salvation.**

a. **When I heard, my body trembled:** Habakkuk showed the proper response of man under the sovereign power of God. He recognized his own weakness and low standing before this God of all majesty and power.

b. **He will invade him with his troops:** The prophet remembered that the Babylonians were coming, and that this God of sovereign power and majesty would direct their work against Judah.

c. **Though the fig tree may not blossom, not fruit be on the vines... yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation:** In almost a vision, Habakkuk saw the Judean countryside desolate, perhaps from the invading Babylonian army or perhaps from natural calamity. In the midst of this almost complete loss, Habakkuk could still **rejoice in the LORD**.

i. He knew that this God of majesty and power is not *diminished* because man faces difficult trials. Sometimes we think, "If God is so great and powerful, how come I am going through a hard time?" Habakkuk knew this was the wrong question and the wrong attitude. Instead, he said: "I know you are strong and mighty, and if we are in desolate

circumstances it is because we deserve it. I will praise You still, and even rejoice in You."

ii. **Rejoice in the LORD... joy in the God of my salvation:** With desolate circumstances like he just described, Habakkuk could find no joy in the **fig tree** or in the **vines** or in the **fields** or **flock**; yet God was unchanged. He could still **rejoice in the LORD**, because He is unchanging.

iii. Habakkuk didn't just practice positive thinking and shut out the idea of the barren fig tree and the empty cattle stalls. Instead, he saw those problems for what they were and remembered that God was greater than them all.

iv. Benjamin Franklin – who was not a Christian, though he had great respect for the Bible – used Hab 3:17-19 to confound a group of sophisticated, cultured despisers of the Bible. When he was in Paris he heard this group mocking the Bible, and mocking Franklin for his admiration of it. One evening he came among them and said that he had a manuscript containing an ancient poem, that he was quite impressed by the poem and he wanted to read it to them. When he read Hab 3:17-19, his listeners received it with praise and admiration – "What a magnificent poem!" they said, and wanted to know where they could get copies. Franklin told them to just look in Habakkuk chapter 3.

*2. (19) Knowing God's strength, Habakkuk can trust God for strength.*

**The LORD God is my strength;  
He will make my feet like deer's feet,  
And He will make me walk on my high hills.  
To the Chief Musician. With my stringed instruments.**

a. **The LORD God is my strength:** Habakkuk could only properly declare this after he prayed the prayer of faith in the previous verses. He rightly declared that his strength was *not* in fig trees or vines or fields or flocks, but only in the **LORD God**.

i. We might even say that *what we praise is our strength*. If by his words, life, or heart a man lives to praise his own achievements and resources, that those are his *strength*. If by words, life, or heart one praises a person or an idea, then those are his *strength*. We demonstrate that the **LORD God** is our **strength** when we praise Him.

b. **He will make my feet like deer's feet:** Habakkuk thought of the deer running about on the **high hills**, never losing a step and never falling. More than that, the deer positively dance and leap on the hills – they are full of life and joy. So the prophet proclaimed, “God will set my steps that firmly and lively also. As I trust in Him, He will not allow me to slip or fall, and I will do more than merely plod along – I will skip about with life and joy.”